

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A system for responding to an incoming phone call, comprising:  
means for receiving the incoming phone call;  
means for generating a user alert in response to the incoming phone  
5 call;  
means for enabling selective entry of a user message entered in  
response to the alert while the incoming call is pending; and  
means for playing the user message to the calling party.
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2. The system of claim 1, further comprising means for releasing the  
call after playing the message.
3. The system of claim 1, further comprising means for displaying  
caller identification information to the user.
- 15 4. The system of claim 1, wherein the receiving means includes  
means for activating a user command interface for predetermining period of  
time following commencement of the user alert.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the receiving means includes a  
voice recognition unit for recognizing at least one spoken command.
- 20 6. The system of claim 5, wherein the at least one spoken command  
includes a predetermined instruction and a variable parameter.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein the receiving means includes  
means for manually selecting the user message.
- 25 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the means for receiving includes  
means for recording an audio user message.

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9. The system of claim 1, wherein the means for receiving includes means for storing the user message.

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10. A telephony device for playing a customized message to a caller, comprising:

- 5           a ring detector generating a detection signal in response to an incoming call;  
            a ringer alerting a called party to the incoming call in response to the detection signal;  
            a command interface for receiving one or more message parameters  
10     from the called party; and  
            a controller for activating the command interface in response to the detection signal and for transferring the customized message to the caller according to the message parameters.

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11. The telephony device of claim 10, further comprising:  
15           a voice recognition unit for receiving spoken commands that include the message parameters.

12. The telephony device of claim 10, further comprising:  
            an audio interface for receiving a spoken message from the called party.

20           13. The telephony device of claim 12, further comprising:  
            a memory for storing the spoken message.

14. The telephone device of claim 10, further comprising:  
            a key pad permitting the called party to manually enter the message parameters.

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15. The telephone device of claim 10, further comprising:  
a caller identification unit for displaying caller information to the  
called party.

5 <sup>537</sup> 16. A method for presenting an audio message to a telephone caller,  
comprising:

detecting an incoming telephone call;  
generating a user alert in response to the incoming telephone call;  
receiving a command from a called party in response to the user

10 alert;

generating an audio message based on the command;  
answering the incoming call; and  
playing the audio message to the telephone caller.

15 <sup>Sub B1</sup> 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
activating a voice recognition unit to receive the command.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
recording a spoken message from the called party and including the  
spoken message in the audio message.

20 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
manually entering the command using a key pad.

<sup>Add A4</sup>

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